DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 101 897 RC 008 332

AUTHOR	Baird, Frank L.
TITLE	An Anglo View of Mexican Americans. "Public Service", Vol. 1, No. 2, February 1974.
INSTITUTION	Texas Tech Univ., Lubbock. Center for Public Service.
SPONS AGENCY	Lubbock Chamber of Commerce, Tex.
PUB DATE	Feb 74
NOTE	6p.
JOURNAL CIT	Public Service; V1 n2 Feb 1974
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Anglo Americans; *Attitudes; *Cultural Interrelationships; Group Relations; Interpersonal Relationship; *Mexican Americans; Politics; Social Relations; Stereotypes; *Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	*Lubbock; Texas

ABSTRACT

A survey, conducted in late 1972, assessed Anglos' views of Lubbock's 17.3 percent Mexican American population and their perceptions of local Anglos' feelings concerning Mexican Americans. Respondents were 550 Lubbock Anglo households randomly selected from the local city directory. Respondents represented a cross-section of Anglo Lubbockites, averaging 36 years old, with more than 1 year of college, head of a family of 3.8 persons, and receiving an annual income of $11,250. Questionnaires were distributed by students to the respondents who were asked to read over the questionnaire while the student waited so as to be available to explain anything which the respondent felt needed clarification. Some findings were: (1) Anglos perceived Mexican Americans as individuals rather than as a monolithic stereotyped mass; (2) Anglos said they would not reject a Mexican American at the polls if he were otherwise qualified and the office he sought was a local one even though no Mexican American candidate had yet been successful; (3) 52.9 percent of the respondents considered relations between themselves and Mexican Americans were only "average" while 17.1 percent felt they were "poor"; and (4) 65.2 percent preferred that Mexican Americans join Anglo organizations rather than form their own. (NQ)

ED101897

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

rec 28-10-74

PUBLIC SERVICE

CENTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE / TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY / LUBBOCK, TEXAS 79409

Vol. 1, No. 2 Lubbock, Texas 79409 February 1974

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

AN ANGLO VIEW OF MEXICAN AMERICANS*

Frank L. Baird
Texas Tech University

Television commercials and other media portrayals notwithstanding, Anglos in Lubbock, the largest city of the West Texas plains, today say they perceive Mexican Americans as individuals rather than as a monolithic stereotyped mass. Moreover, Anglos say that they would not reject a Mexican American at the polls if he were otherwise qualified and the office he sought a local one even though no Mexican American candidate has yet been successful. These are among the significant findings of a survey conducted in late 1972 of 550 Lubbock Anglo households selected at random from the local city directory.[1] The survey sought to assess Anglos' views of the city's 17.3 percent Mexican American population and their perceptions of local Anglos' feelings concerning Mexican Americans.

Even though Lubbock, a city of 149,000, is geographically almost equidistant from Dallas, Albuquerque, Oklahoma City, and El Paso, it is culturally an extension of rural downstate Texas, with its economy largely oriented to irrigated cotton production. The development of irrigated cotton farming largely accounts for the two large migrations into Lubbock in the past thirty years: Anglo cotton farmers and Mexican American field hands. The values of its Anglo population thus include a typically Southern attitude toward racial and ethnic matters, and a largely traditional political culture.[2] Most Mexican Americans came to the area in response to the need for field labor, many of them subsequently moving into Lubbock with the mechanization of cotton farming. Socially and economically deprived in large part, as most originated in South Texas they were acculturated to the generally subservient role assigned them by the traditional Texas culture.[3] Thus, unlike the situation in Amarillo and San Angelo, each of the focal point of a different West Texas subculture, no Spanish-surnamed person has yet been elected to public office in Lubbock, despite four attempts at the municipal level since 1968.

Those who participated in the survey represented a cross-section of Anglo Lubbockites, averaging 36 years old, with more than one year of college, head of a family of 3.8 persons, and receiving an annual income of $11,250. The sample was broadly representative of local adult Anglos. However, it averaged [redacted] years older which likely accounts for its annual income some $[redacted]500 greater than average. Furthermore, the sample tended to be of a lower status occupationally.[4] Only 42.6 percent of the respondents held white collar jobs (one-quarter employed in professional and technical capacities or as self-employed businessmen or managers and 17.7 percent in clerical and sales positions), compared to 60.9 percent for the total SMSA.[5] Skilled workers comprised 13.0 percent of the sample. Another one-third consisted of housewives (20.0 percent) and students (13.0 percent), while only 6.3 percent identified themselves as either semi-skilled or unskilled workers. Although their length of residence in Lubbock averaged only 4.1 years, almost two-thirds were native Texans. A like proportion identified themselves as either Baptists, Methodists, or Church of Christ adherents. Typical Texans politically, Democrats (49.7 percent) outnumbered Republicans (27.4 percent) nearly two to one, but almost one-sixth (15.8 percent) considered themselves "Independents." Further, about two-fifths (39.8 percent) have changed political parties—almost half of these in the past two years—and from Democratic to Republican by a three to one ratio.

Most (52.9 percent) of the respondents consider relations between themselves and Mexican Americans to be only "average" and almost one-fifth (17.1 percent) feels they are "poor." More importantly, almost all (96.7 percent) believe such relations could be improved. Furthermore, they profess an active interest in how Mexican Americans are getting along in Lubbock, more than one-fifth (21.2 percent) stating "much interest" and an additional majority (55.0 percent) indicating "some interest." In contrast to a companion survey of local Mexican Americans in which almost one-half (48.0 percent) felt that *all* local Anglos were prejudiced against them,[6] the Anglo population is less likely to detect prejudice on either side; but, insofar as any prejudice exists, Anglos find it more widely among Mexican Americans, than within their own group, as indicated by the following responses:

*Survey was funded by the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce with assistance from the Institute for University Research, Texas Tech University.

Table 1

Are all Anglos prejudiced against Mexican Americans?		Are all Mexican Americans prejudiced against Anglos?	
Yes	6.3%	Yes	10.9%
No	93.7	No	89.1

A hard core two-fifths of the Anglos claim to firmly accept Mexican Americans as their equals, as indicated by the 40.0 percent who, instead of checking what they thought was most important for Mexican Americans to be accepted as their equals in Lubbock, said they already considered them as such. Several pages later in the questionnaire, the question was rephrased and elicited the same response from almost half (49.1 percent). Such a sentiment ranged upward to 91.8 percent who felt that Mexican Americans "*should* be treated as equals in all ways." Thus, some who do not consider Mexican Americans as equals nevertheless feel normatively that they ought to be.

Moreover, the data provide evidence that monolithic stereotypes of Mexican Americans have been eroded by a perception of them largely as individuals. Kibbe describes the status of accommodation between the two groups in the early days of the cotton era in Lubbock.

> This is an average picture of what happened in 1944. On one Saturday afternoon in October of that year, 496 migratory labor trucks were counted on the streets of Lubbock, the "capital" of the cotton-raising Plains area. Lubbock is a city of between 40,000 and 50,000 inhabitants. Each truck carried an average of fifteen migrants, of all ages, which meant an estimated total of 7,400 migrants who had come to Lubbock to spend the weekend, seek new opportunities for employment, purchase their groceries and other supplies for the following week, and find a little recreation.
>
> Large crews have been known to spend as much as $100.00 in one day, just in the purchase of groceries, during the peak of the season. But to make a very conservative estimate, let us suppose that each of the 496 crews in Lubbock that weekend spent an average of $25.00. That is a total of $12,400.00 income to business places of all kinds in one weekend.
>
> Yet Lubbock had made no provision whatever for taking care of this influx of people, which occurs regularly every fall, and every weekend during each fall. There was no place where they might park their trucks, take a bath, change their clothes, even go to the toilet.[7]

PUBLIC SERVICE

Center for Public Service – Texas Tech University

Jack W. Hopkins, Director

Lubbock, Texas 79409

Public Service, the bulletin of the Center for Public Service of Texas Tech University, is published three times a year in November, February, and May.

The works in *Public Service* are intended to bring responsible and intelligent scholarship to bear on current governmental problems, particularly those with special meaning for the citizens and officials of Texas and the region. Most issues are written by members of the Department of Political Science at Texas Tech University, but contributions from other scholars and public officials will be considered for publication.

Yet when respondents to this survey were asked to compare the two groups in terms of fourteen traditional stereotypic perceptions of Mexican Americans, almost half (46.7 percent) said that they saw no difference between the two groups. Those who did perceive differences, however, viewed the Mexican American as less ambitious (59.8 percent), law abiding (50.7 percent), dependable (50.5 percent), and clean (50.2 percent), and more emotional (48.2 percent) and politically liberal (42.5 percent). The overwhelming majority, however, expressed doubt about the validity of such generalizations when the latter was brought to their attention.

Table 2

"I filled out the above but am doubtful about generalizing about Mexican Americans that much because I look upon each one as a separate individual."			
Yes	92.5%	No	7.5%

Thus, almost half rejected stereotyped generalizations about Mexican Americans on their own initiative and the overwhelming proportion expressed serious doubts when the possibility was presented to them. Additional evidence of this is provided by responses to another item in which a majority (51.3 percent) stated they view each individual Mexican American separately and another quarter (24.1 percent) which views most of them in such terms, while they are perceived as either all, or nearly all, alike by the remaining quarter. This tendency was further indicated by the following item:

Table 3

Most important to me in evaluating an individual Mexican American in Lubbock is:			
Income	1.2%	Age	3.1%
Complexion	1.2	Occupation	5.6
Where he came from	1.4	Education	10.2
Social class	2.7	Personal habits	13.5
Sex	3.1	Individual personality	58.0

Assuming that the last two categories signify that each Mexican American is judged individually, then 71.5 percent claim to do so. A final indication comes from a question concerning Mexican Americans as credit risks; again the results were strikingly similar, three-quarters (74.2 percent) feeling the extent of risk depends upon the individual, whether he be Mexican American or Anglo.

In view of contemporary Anglo sentiments regarding Mexican Americans, in what areas do the former feel that relations between the two groups are particularly bad? The economic realm was perceived to be worst, followed by social and individual relations, with religious the least problematic.

Table 4

Economic	29.0%	Educational	11.8%
Social	17.5	Cultural	10.1
Individual	13.8	Religious	6.6
Political	11.2		

PUBLIC SERVICE

With this issue, the Center for Public Service is pleased to offer "An Anglo View of Mexican Americans," by Frank L. Baird of the Department of Political Science at Texas Tech University. This article reports in part the findings of a continuing study by Dr. Baird of Mexican Americans in politics in the Southwest.

Respondents were also asked, at a point later in the questionnaire, in which areas they felt Mexican American-Anglo relations stand the best chance of being improved.

Table 5

Individual	32.3%	Cultural	10.0%
Education	18.9	Religious	6.6
Social	13.5	Political	5.9
Economic	12.8		

The field of individual (person-to-person) relations was viewed as far and away the most promising, and Anglo attitudes toward this matter appear to confirm this finding with the educational and social areas ranked a poor second and third, respectively. Bilingualism in the basic educational skills is viewed as the most widely acceptable change in this area, one-quarter (24.5 percent) feeling local elementary schools should require students to be able to speak, read, and write in both Spanish and English, but only half as many approving of required courses in Mexican American culture. In addition, large majorities (63.3 percent and 74.1 percent respectively) favor both proposals as electives. On the other hand, conducting elementary school classes in both languages was rejected by a two-to-one margin.

In regard to their willingness to engage in closer personal relations with Mexican Americans, Lubbock Anglos seem to be most receptive to the idea of such casual interrelationships as visiting in one another's homes. While they are least favorably inclined to intermarriage, the evidence indicates considerable opposition to closer relations in general between offspring of the two groups and to having their children serve as primary vehicles for social change. This may indicate fear of too rapid social change which might follow from closer relations between those not yet fully socialized to the norms of their elders.

Table 6

What is your opinion of:

	Favor	Don't Care	Tolerate	Disfavor
Mexican American as guest in your home	66.5%	12.2%	16.1%	5.2%
Be guest in Mexican American home	68.0	11.5	15.3	5.2
Mexican American as playmate for your children	33.7	32.2	23.0	11.1
Anglo-Mexican American dating	16.0	21.7	16.8	45.5
Anglo-Mexican American marriage	14.2	22.0	14.2	49.6

Adhering to the melting pot theory as applied to organizational life as well as home visits, almost two-thirds (65.2 percent) prefer that Mexican Americans join Anglo organizations rather than form their own.

Improved employment opportunities for Mexican Americans appear acceptable to Anglos, less than 5 percent of whom oppose Mexican Americans as sales clerks, skilled tradesmen and professional people, while fewer than one in five say that they would not like having a Mexican American boss. Particularly promising is the fact that more than one-third (34.7 percent) profess not to care about the ethnic origin of those occupying such positions.

Insight into the low ranking which Anglos accord improved political relations between themselves and Mexican Americans can be gained from the relatively unfavorable Anglo opinion of both Mexican American political interest and political leadership, as evidenced by the following:

Table 7

What do you feel is the degree of political interest of:

	The Anglo Community	The Mexican American Community
Very interested	14.0%	6.2%
Interested	59.5	33.7
Slightly interested	23.1	47.5
Not interested	3.4	12.6

Table 8

How would you rate political leaders here from the standpoint of their political effectiveness?

	Anglo Political Leaders	Mexican American Political Leaders
Very good	8.8%	4.1%
Good	35.2	17.2
Average	43.1	35.8
Poor	10.6	35.3
Very poor	2.3	7.6

In terms of Mexican American ability to achieve electoral victory, the Lubbock Mexican American has not yet been fully accepted as an equal. Lubbock Anglos indicate a greater willingness to elect a Mexican American to the local school board than to any other office. This corresponds favorably with the respondent's view that, aside from the individual area, the educational arena is the one which they feel offers the best prospects for improved relations between the two groups. This coupled with the low voter turnout in such elections appears to augur particularly well for a qualified Mexican American school board candidate. City Council and County Commissioner

posts are almost as accessible. The apparent chances of achieving electoral success diminish progressively, however, the higher the office. With greater support for election to a legislative than to an executive office at all levels, the sample culminates in almost one half (44.0 percent) who would not favor a presidential candidate because of his Mexican American ethnic origin.

Table 9

What is your opinion of Mexican Americans as:

	Favor	Tolerate	Disfavor	Don't Care
Mayor	13.9%	26.6%	27.1%	32.4%
City Council	21.6	27.3	14.6	36.5
School Board	25.3	26.7	11.5	36.5
County Commissioner	20.7	26.0	16.4	36.9
Judge	17.6	23.4	24.4	34.6
State Representative	18.7	23.3	23.8	34.2
State Senator	16.6	23.7	25.5	34.2
U.S. Congressman	15.7	20.6	29.5	34.2
U.S. Senator	14.2	21.4	30.3	34.1
Governor	11.8	17.7	38.3	32.2
Vice President	11.3	17.1	40.9	30.7
President	10.1	15.1	44.0	30.8

Again, as in the area of employment, one-third (33.9 percent) professes to be unconcerned with the ethnic origin of candidates, presumably judging them on the basis of other criteria. Kibbe's observation of twenty-seven years ago to the effect that with occasional exceptions Mexican Americans in Texas "are without due representation on school boards, city councils, and other government or quasi-governmental units" still applies to Lubbock.[8] However, Kibbe's attribution of this to an "effective, but unwritten law" in which Anglo politicians seek to divide and conquer the Mexican American vote by sponsoring an opposing Mexican American candidate wherever a Mexican American files for office has not been the case in any Lubbock election to date.[9] A more likely explanation would be a vicious circle phenomenon in which the Mexican American perceives Anglo prejudice against him to be so extensive that it makes political activity relatively futile thus also discouraging some potentially attractive Mexican American candidates from running for office. Conversely, such political behavior would serve to reinforce Anglo perceptions of a lack of Mexican American political interest and poor Mexican American political leadership.[10]

What do Lubbock Anglos feel that Mexican Americans desirous of improved relations with them should seek to avoid? Two things in particular. First, he should not speak Spanish in a group in which not all of the members understand the language. This practice is opposed by the majority (53.7 percent) and favored by only a tiny minority (6.7 percent) with the remainder either tolerating or unconcerned about it. Somewhat less offensive to Anglos is the use of the word "gringo" with reference to them, which 39.5 percent disfavor but one in twenty-five (4.7 percent) approves.

A companion survey of Lubbock Mexican Americans revealed their feeling that to be accepted as equals by local Anglos a higher standard of living was more important than acculturation to Anglo norms.[11] The validity of this perception is open to serious question. Even though almost two-thirds of the Anglos (63.8 percent) perceive the norm of their group in such circumstances is to place more emphasis on a higher standard of living than on acculturation, nevertheless when the individual respondent was asked which he personally felt to be most important, slightly more than half (51.1 percent) selected acculturation over a higher living standard (48.9 percent).

These findings suggest that there is a discrepancy between what Lubbock Anglo respondents feel to be the views of their group and the manner in which they characterize their own individual opinions. For example, more than 90 percent felt that a Mexican American was expected by Anglos to adopt the Anglo culture and English language in order to get ahead in Lubbock. But, when asked their personal view, only two-thirds took this position. Likewise, 76.5 percent felt that well-to-do Mexican Americans are more apt than poor Mexican Americans to be accepted as equals by Lubbock Anglos. Yet when they were asked the basis for their own personal evaluation of a Mexican American, only 1.2 percent chose income. Finally, there is the matter, referred to above, of the relative importance of acculturation and a higher living standard.

Possible explanations for these discrepancies abound. There is always the possibility that some respondents, particularly in answering questions eliciting their individual views, may have given replies which they considered more socially desirable ("proper") than totally frank, but this is a matter of conjecture. It should be noted in this regard that each respondent answered the questionnaire anonymously, in private, and at his leisure. Conversely, one might speculate that, if time is a positive factor in improvement in Anglo-Mexican American relations, then—in light of the fact that the survey respondents average ten years older than Lubbock Anglos in general—the opinions revealed by this survey may be less conciliatory than those of the overall Lubbock Anglo population. Finally, it seems possible that there is a lag between what Anglos perceive to be the views of their group and what those views actually are at present. According to this view, Lubbock Anglos may perceive the views of their group as they likely were in the past—not as they are today, when respondents reveal a more tolerant and conciliatory attitude than they attribute to Anglos as a group. If this lag does in fact exist, then widespread diffusion of many of the Anglo opinions uncovered by this survey would well lead more Lubbockites of both groups to realize that the prospects for improved Anglo-Mexican American relations in Lubbock are better than has been assumed, and could provide greater confidence for those interested in achieving such a goal.

NOTES

[1] Questionnaires were distributed by students to the respondents who were asked to read over the questionnaire while the student waited so as to be available to explain anything which the respondent felt needed clarification. The respondent then filled out the questionnaire in private and at his leisure, the student returned at a prearranged time some one week later to retrieve the completed questionnaire.

[2] Daniel J. Elazar, *American Federalism: A View from the States, 2nd Edition*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972, p. 113; D. W. Meinig, *Imperial Texas*, Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1969, pp. 104-105.

[3] Frank L. Baird and Jesús G. Guzmán, Jr., "Mexican Americans in Lubbock: Political Subculture and Mexican American Political Behavior," paper presented at 1973 Annual Meeting of the Rocky Mountain Social Science Association, Laramie, Wyoming, April 27, 1973, pp. 10-11.

[4] U.S., Bureau of the Census, *1970 U.S. Census of Population, General Population Characteristics: Texas Social and Economic Characteristics: Texas*, and *Census of Population and Housing: 1970, Census Tracts, Final Report PHC (1)-120 Lubbock, Texas.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Survey of Lubbock Mexican Americans by Frank L. Baird, 1972.

[7] Pauline R. Kibbe, *Latin Americans in Texas*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1946, p. 177.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[10] This is somewhat similar to the vicious circle argument cited as a possible explanation for Mexican Americans' indifference to citizenship advanced in Leo Grebler, Joan W. Moore, and Ralph C. Guzmán, *The Mexican-American People*, New York: The Free Press, 1970, p. 559.

[11] Survey of Lubbock Mexican Americans by Frank L. Baird, 1972.